

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 468 949

SO 032 397

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TITLE A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict.  
Study Guide.  
INSTITUTION WETA-TV, Washington, DC.  
SPONS AGENCY Arthur Vining Davis Foundations, Jacksonville, FL.  
PUB DATE 2000-00-00  
NOTE 22p.; Also funded by the Albert Einstein Institution. Part of  
the PBS, WETA, and York Zimmerman, Inc. "A Force More  
Powerful" series.  
AVAILABLE FROM WETA, 2775 South Quincy Street, Arlington, VA 22206. Tel:  
703-998-2600; Web site: <http://www.pbs.org/weta/forcemorepowerful/>.  
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052)  
EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; \*Conflict Resolution; \*Government Role; \*Modern  
History; \*Political Issues; Public Television; Secondary  
Education; Social Studies; \*World History  
IDENTIFIERS \*Nonviolence; Repression; Responsiveness (Government);  
Timelines

## ABSTRACT

This study guide, intended for high school and college classrooms, provides background information, timelines, and program synopses for the various programs which make up the public television series, "A Force More Powerful." The series is about popular movements battling entrenched regimes or military forces with weapons very different from guns and bullets. Forms of noncooperation (such as boycotts, resignations, and civil disobedience) helped subvert the operations of government. Direct intervention in the form of sit-ins, nonviolent sabotage, and blockades frustrated many rulers' efforts to subjugate people. The use of nonviolent sanctions has been far more frequent than usually supposed and has not been limited by the type of regime being opposed or by place or time. News coverage of mass nonviolent action has left the impression that people power comes from the size or energy of crowds that picket in city streets. The true rhythms of nonviolent action are less spontaneous than strategic. It has little to do with shouting slogans and putting flowers in gun barrels; it has everything to do with separating governments from their means of control. The study guide contains synopses of the following programs: "Nashville 'We Were Warriors'" (1959-60); "India Defying the Crown" (1930-31); "South Africa 'Freedom in Our Lifetime'" (1984-85); "Denmark Living with the Enemy" (1940-44); "Poland 'We've Caught God by the Arm'" (1980); and "Chile Defeat of a Dictator" (1983-88). (Contains a list of 48 print and Internet resources and 11 notes.) (BT)

# A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict. Study Guide.

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SO 032 397

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**"WHEN PEOPLE DECIDE THEY WANT TO BE FREE...  
THERE IS NOTHING THAT CAN STOP THEM."**

**DESMOND TUTU**



# **A FORCE MORE POWERFUL**

**A CENTURY OF NONVIOLENT CONFLICT**

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**STUDY GUIDE**

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Educational materials for *A Force More Powerful*:

*A Century of Nonviolent Conflict* were developed  
in association with Toby Levine Communications, Inc.,  
Potomac, Maryland.

To order the companion book, *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict*,  
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Major funding for this project was provided by Susan and Perry Lerner.

Additional funding was provided by The Albert Einstein Institution; Elizabeth and John H. van Merkenstijn, III;  
Abby and Alan Levy; and The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations.

# INTRODUCTION

On Friday night in December 1981, Lech Walesa and other leaders of Solidarity were arrested after a meeting in Gdansk. For sixteen months their free trade-union movement had shaken the foundation of the Communist Party's hold on Poland through factory occupations and strikes. Now martial law had been imposed, and Solidarity was looking down the gun barrel of defeat. When he was taken away, Walesa challenged his captors. "At this moment, you lost," he warned them. "We are arrested, but you have driven a nail into your communist coffin... You'll come back to us on your knees."<sup>1</sup>

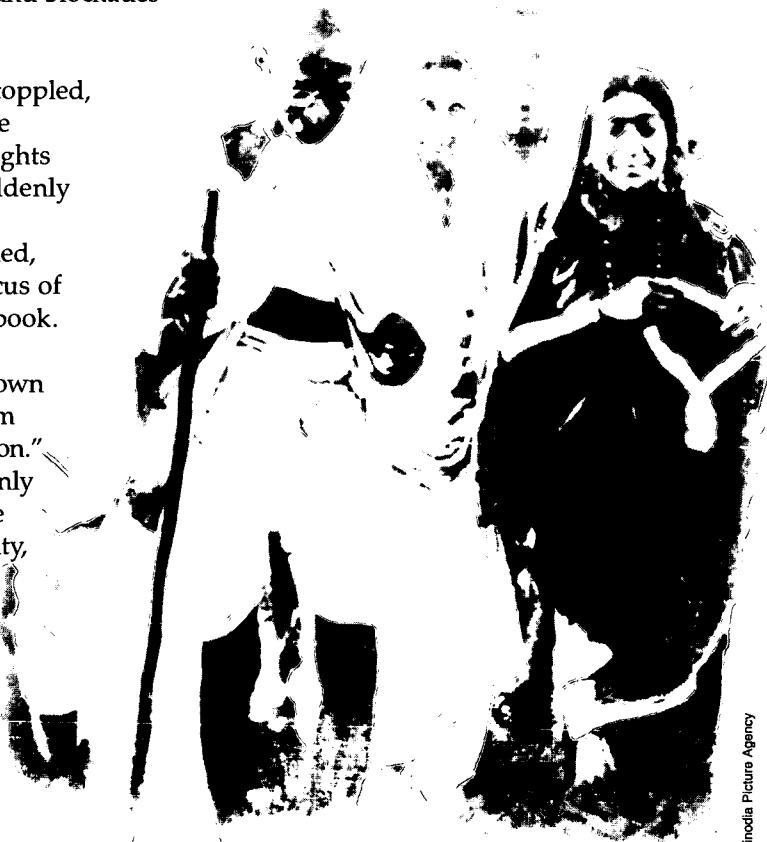
If only violence is power and if repression has no answer, Walesa's words were foolish. But he knew that Solidarity, by depriving the regime of the Polish people's support, had already defined the course of the conflict. When the state had run out of ways to coerce their compliance, it would have to come to terms. Seven years later Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski, the leader who had jailed Walesa, invited him and other Solidarity leaders to roundtable talks that led to a new government. In 1990 Walesa, a shipyard electrician only 10 years before, became president of Poland. He had never fired a shot, nor had anyone in Solidarity. But together they threw back the shroud of authoritarian power and gave freedom to every Pole.

A FORCE MORE POWERFUL is about popular movements battling entrenched regimes or military forces with weapons very different from guns and bullets. Strikes, boycotts or other disruptive actions were used as sanctions, as aggressive measures to constrain or punish opponents and to win concessions. Petitions, parades, walkouts and demonstrations roused public support for the resisters. Forms of noncooperation (such as boycotts, resignations and civil disobedience) helped subvert the operations of government. And direct intervention in the form of sit-ins, nonviolent sabotage and blockades frustrated many rulers' efforts to subjugate people.<sup>2</sup>

The historical results were massive: tyrants were toppled, governments were overthrown, occupying armies were impeded and political systems that withheld human rights were shattered. Entire societies were transformed, suddenly or gradually, by nonviolent resistance that destroyed opponents' ability to control events. How this happened, and the ideas underlying nonviolent action, are the focus of this documentary television series and its companion book.

In 1936 Mohandas Gandhi was visited by a well-known African-American minister and his wife. They asked him whether nonviolent resistance was "a form of direct action." Gandhi replied vigorously, "It is not one form, it is the only form... It is the greatest and the most activist force in the world... It is a force which is more positive than electricity, and more powerful than even ether." For Gandhi, nonviolent resistance was more than belief. He conceived of it, as if it were a kind of science, with laws to be applied, yielding power that was predictable.<sup>3</sup>

Few who relied on nonviolent sanctions in the twentieth century did so because of a principled attachment to nonviolence. For some, arms were unavailable as a way to fight. Others had seen a violent insurrection fail, at devastating cost to life and property. But they had no desire to be passive: they wanted passionately to overturn the rulers or the laws that subjected them. Therefore, they chose to fight with a different form of weapon.



Gandhi with Mrs. Sarojini Naidu on Dandi march, April 1930

The leaders who opted for nonviolent weapons often learned from resistance movements of the past. Indian nationalist leader Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948) was inspired by the Russian Revolution of 1905. The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other African-American leaders traveled to India to study Gandhi's tactics. When Chileans organized against the dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet in the 1980s, and Filipinos organized against Ferdinand Marcos, the president of their country from 1965 to 1986, they were influenced by Richard Attenborough's motion picture *Gandhi*. The experience of these and the other nonviolent resisters in our stories teach many lessons:

The use of nonviolent sanctions has been far more frequent than usually supposed and has not been limited by the type of regime being opposed or by place or time.

There is no correlation between the degree of violence faced by a nonviolent movement and the likelihood of its success. Some movements that faced the most violent opponents were the most successful.

A movement's ability to thrive degenerates when it uses violence, because once a regime is opposed by deadly force, repression intensifies.

Mobilizing and sustaining a popular movement geared to nonviolent action go hand in hand with forming a civil society and sustaining democracy.

News coverage of mass nonviolent action has left the impression that "people power" comes from the size or energy of crowds that agitate in city streets. The true rhythm of nonviolent action is less spontaneous than it is strategic. It has little to do with shouting slogans and putting flowers in gun barrels. It has everything to do with separating governments from their means of control.

The greatest misconception about conflict is that violence is the ultimate form of power, surpassing other methods of advancing a just cause or defeating injustice. But Indians, Danes, Poles, South Africans, Chileans, African Americans and many others have proved the efficacy of nonviolent action, which "is capable of wielding great power even against ruthless rulers and military regimes, because it attacks the most vulnerable characteristic of all hierarchical institutions and governments: dependence on the governed."<sup>4</sup>



Sit-in at Walgreen's lunch counter in Nashville, February 1960

## PROGRAM ONE: NASHVILLE — "WE WERE WARRIORS"

### Synopsis

In late 1959 the Rev. James Lawson, a young civil rights activist, starts training African-American college students in Nashville, Tennessee, in techniques of nonviolent action. Inspired by a trip to India to study Gandhi and by the 1955 bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Lawson decides to try his own hand at nonviolent struggle against racial segregation. To stifle the movement for equality, defenders of the old order in the South resort to violence and repression.

On February 13, 1960, after months of training, Lawson's students take seats at whites-only lunch counters in several big department stores in Nashville. When they try to order food, they are ignored by the waitresses and left sitting there all day. They return several more times, and then on February 27 they are beaten and arrested. Outraged by the way innocent students have been treated, the black community in Nashville begins boycotting the stores. The disruption of the city's life makes many whites uncomfortable, and business suffers badly

from the loss of black and white customers downtown. Finally, after the bombing of a black lawyer's home and a subsequent protest march, the mayor of Nashville tells black students that he believes segregation is wrong. Soon stores desegregate. Within weeks black people are eating at the counters formerly reserved for whites only.

## GANDHI AND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

**M**ohandas Gandhi was the twentieth century's first major practitioner of nonviolent action who was also a master strategist in waging conflict. His ideas, though rooted in Indian traditions and Hindu beliefs, have inspired people around the world.

Gandhi's core ideas took shape not in India, but in South Africa, where he went to make a living as a young lawyer in the 1890s. Indians, like other non-European people in South Africa, were subject to severe discrimination. White officials limited their voting rights and restricted where they could live and do business. Gandhi quickly became a leader among South Africa's Indians. He initially opposed these restrictions using conventional political tools (lawsuits, petitions and newspaper editorials), none of which was much help in advancing the rights of his people.

In 1906 Gandhi joined a large group of Indians at a theater in Johannesburg to protest a new law requiring all "Asiatics" to have registration cards. After taking an oath not to cooperate with the new regulations, Indians picketed registration offices and burned their registration cards. Over the next several years, thousands of nonviolent protesters went to jail, including Gandhi himself — three times. By 1914 their protests and refusal to cooperate with the authorities had mounted to such a pitch that the government withdrew the registration act.

Gandhi's actions reflected a strategy of political action that he put to use when he returned to India to lead a movement against British rule. He carefully considered how he and other Indians, without resorting to violence, could force the British to accept their demands. He called this method of action *satyagraha* (meaning, roughly, holding firmly to the truth). The key to *satyagraha* was to identify an unjust law (such as the registration requirement), refuse to obey it and accept the consequences — a fine, a jail term, a beating or worse. This, Gandhi believed, would touch the conscience and change the minds of the oppressors and make it possible to remedy the injustice.

But the British showed few signs of bending, and Gandhi turned to more aggressive forms of nonviolent action. He knew the British were vulnerable: they depended on those they ruled. Governments cannot govern if ordinary



Demonstrators march in Delhi against importation of foreign cloth, 1922

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### Timeline

**December 1955** — Bus boycott begins in Montgomery, Alabama.

**March 1960** — Boycott of department stores in Nashville begins.

**September 1959** — James Lawson begins nonviolent action training workshops in Nashville.

**April 19, 1960** — The home of a black lawyer, Z. Alexander Looby, is bombed; protesters march on city hall; the mayor calls for desegregation of lunch counters.

**February 13, 1960** — Nashville students hold first sit-in.

**May 10, 1960** — Lunch counters begin to serve African-Americans.

**February 27, 1960** — Students at lunch counters are assaulted, then arrested.

### "WE SHALL OVERCOME"

On April 19, 1960 thousands of people marched to Nashville's courthouse to protest the bombing of the home of Z. Alexander Looby, a black lawyer. At the base of the courthouse steps, a young white man named Guy Carawan took out his guitar and began playing a song, "I'll Overcome Some Day," which had come out of black churches and later been adopted as a protest song by strikers in South Carolina. By the time Carawan started singing it that day in Nashville, the words had changed somewhat. As Carawan began singing "We Shall Overcome," a few of the students in Lawson's group joined in. The words were easy to pick up, and soon the whole crowd was singing. The civil rights revolution had its anthem, which was later sung by protest movements all over the world.

people do not pay taxes, obey laws or serve in the police and armed forces; wealthy property owners depend on people from the lower classes to pay them rent or work in their enterprises. When people suspend this kind of cooperation, when they deny their consent to the ruling system, they are using power they intrinsically possess and coercing the government to deal with their demands. "They won't let us leave them alone," one British official lamented.

## NONVIOLENT RESPONSE TO REPRESSION

Violent repression was used against each of the nonviolent movements described in these television programs. The British in India, the Nazis in Denmark, the Communists in Poland, the apartheid government in South Africa, the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile and the segregationists in Nashville all resorted, at one time or another, to beatings or shootings as a means of control or retaliation.

The possibility of violence poses a dilemma for nonviolent movements. If such movements wilt when faced with a show of force, they can hope to accomplish little against any regime that uses fear to stay in power. If there is a violent showdown, a massive setback can occur, as happened in China with the 1989 massacre of pro-democracy protesters in Tiananmen Square. Sometimes, however, the use of repression backfires. This happened at Dharasana in India, in Nashville when police beat students and in Poland when the communists imposed martial law. If a movement is unprepared for repression, it can be a mortal blow. But if a movement is prepared for repression, it can also be an opportunity.

James Lawson, the Methodist minister who built a movement among black college students in Nashville, understood this dilemma. Wherever African-Americans had acted against segregation in the U.S. South, they had drawn violent, sometimes lethal, reprisals from white vigilantes, who often worked hand-in-glove with police. Lawson made certain that his students would be prepared. In 1959 he began holding workshops for student volunteers. In addition to teaching them Gandhian ideas, he gave them practical training in how to protect themselves from violence while staying calm and restraining their impulse to strike back.

The students who participated in the lunch counter sit-ins, which began in early 1960, were a small and disciplined corps of activists. They did not flinch when they learned, after the first few sit-ins, that Nashville's



Gandhi gathers salt on his march in India, 1930

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## PROGRAM ONE: INDIA — DEFYING THE CROWN

### Synopsis

In early 1930 the Indian National Congress, led by Mohandas Gandhi, launches a campaign of civil disobedience against British colonial rule, called the "raj." The British have controlled India for well over a century, but in the last few decades Indian nationalists have clamored for Indians to obtain a greater degree of self-government. Frustrated by their slow progress, the nationalists now look to Gandhi to persuade Indians to stop cooperating with the raj and join his nonviolent campaign for outright independence.

The campaign begins in March with Gandhi's decision to march from his ashram 240 miles to the sea, where he will break the government's monopoly on the making and sale of salt, a form of British control that all Indians can understand and oppose. Soon other resistance multiplies: Indians boycott British cloth, withhold taxes, quit the civil service and cut down state forests. All this puts a great strain on the government's budget and administrative structure. But the raj fights back. Police club protesters, seize the land of tax resisters and send tens of

thousands to jail. The campaign continues into March 1931, when the British viceroy Lord Irwin invites Gandhi to talk: the government will end the repression and consider giving India more autonomy if Gandhi will call off the campaign. Gandhi agrees, and civil disobedience ends for a time. It has failed to dislodge the British, but it has awakened millions of people to their own power and laid the foundation for India's independence, which eventually comes in 1947.

mayor had knuckled under to white supremacists and agreed to pull the police out when the protesters arrived for the February 27 sit-in. This gave the racists free rein.

When the students took their seats at the lunch counters, thugs walked into the stores and began shouting at them, yanking them from their chairs and stomping those who had fallen to the floor. The students had cigarettes stubbed out on their skin and mustard and ketchup poured over them. None of them struck back at their assailants. Nonetheless, the students — not their attackers — were arrested and charged with disorderly conduct. As soon as those under arrest were led out and taken to jail, reinforcements were dispatched to take their places at the counters by a network of monitors posted by the students.

The police had never seen anything like this before. These educated, well-dressed and polite young people let themselves be beaten and arrested, and those who were arrested refused to pay their own bail. The students had made their point: crowd violence and jail would no longer work to intimidate black people and keep them in "their place." Nashville's white establishment would have to find some other way to end the disruptions the sit-ins were bringing to the downtown business district.

The students' nonviolent discipline accomplished even more. The violence sparked outrage among the broader black community in the city. Soon almost all of black Nashville was boycotting the downtown stores, adding the economic power of consumers to the voices of the demonstrators and thereby winning strategic victory.



Rev. James Lawson being led to a police wagon, March 1960

## REINFORCING THE MOVEMENT

Mkhuzeli Jack, the spokesman for the mass boycott campaign against apartheid in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, had a genius for strengthening the movement he helped lead. He realized that spontaneous protests against authority were less efficacious than widely organized protest. By creating "big centers of resistance within the community," Jack says, the popular movement made it "extremely difficult for the security forces to crush" them.<sup>5</sup>

Only 27 years old when he rose to prominence, Jack was resolved to keep the movement nonviolent. That way "there would be no excuse for anybody, old or young, disabled or not" to avoid joining. Another reason

## Timeline

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1906 – Gandhi leads nonviolent campaign against anti-Indian laws in South Africa.

1915 – Gandhi returns to India from South Africa.

1920 – Gandhi leads first of his all-India campaigns against the British Empire.

**March 12, 1930** – Gandhi and his followers begin Salt March, which launches the civil disobedience campaign for independence.

**April 6, 1930** – Marchers arrive at coast and make salt; civil disobedience begins to spread across India.

**May 4, 1930** – Gandhi is arrested.

**January 1931** – Gandhi and other Indian leaders are released from prison.

**February 17, 1931** – Gandhi-Irwin talks begin, resulting in "truce" and suspension of civil disobedience.

**January 1, 1932** – Civil disobedience resumes.

**August 1947** – India gains independence from British Empire.



was to win the "high ground in the community." Youth violence against police and soldiers had alienated wage earners, women and ordinary citizens whom the movement would need to sustain mass action.<sup>6</sup> Jack and his colleagues also realized that confining the struggle to black townships would limit its power, leaving unscathed those who condoned apartheid — the white community. So a boycott of white-owned businesses was begun.

The boycotters' initial demands were modest: open public facilities to all races, remove troops from the townships and end workplace discrimination. Five days later the South African

government imposed a state of emergency for certain areas, including Port Elizabeth. Curfews and travel restrictions were instituted, and soldiers were allowed to make peremptory searches and arrests. Then the boycott committee increased its demands: end the state of emergency and release political prisoners.

The boycotts' economic pressure drove a wedge between business and government. Store owners rained telegrams on the government, telling it to meet the boycotters' demands. And the boycott could not be halted by repression. "If they don't want to buy, what sort of crime is it?" a police official recalled. "You can't shoot all these people. You can't lock them all up."<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, white shop owners were left prostrate. Jack told the boycott committee, "We cannot be as bad as this government... Let's not destroy them." In November the committee struck a deal: it suspended the boycott in exchange for the release of black leaders from prison. Because the Christmas shopping season would have strained the black community's adherence to the boycott, suspending it helped to keep the movement unified.<sup>8</sup>

To demonstrate to black South Africans "the tangible benefits of negotiating, of making demands," Mkhuleni Jack arranged a symbolic reentry of the released prisoners into the township.<sup>9</sup> The boycotts' lesson for white business was equally clear: "If the majority of South Africans are not treated like human beings... there cannot be stability in the country, and your business cannot thrive under conditions of instability."<sup>10</sup>

## PROGRAM ONE: SOUTH AFRICA — "FREEDOM IN OUR LIFETIME"

### Synopsis

Beginning in 1984, a wave of unrest sweeps across South Africa's black townships. This is a rebellion against apartheid, the system of race-based discrimination that requires nonwhite people in urban areas to live in overcrowded, impoverished townships; that consigns them to inferior education; and that denies them political rights and economic opportunity. Although the protests are aimed against the apartheid government, they bring chaos and street fighting to township neighborhoods. Thousands of black people die.

In the townships such as those around the industrial city of Port Elizabeth, young black activists — including a shrewd and likable young man named Mkhuleni Jack — decide that armed revolution will not topple apartheid, and they move to steer the revolt toward disciplined nonviolent action. In 1985 the activists declare a boycott of white-owned businesses and demand the troops' withdrawal and release of political prisoners. Stores in Port Elizabeth lose about one-third of their business, and white owners begin clamoring for officials to meet the

boycotters' demands. Eventually, a compromise is reached. Through these and other actions such as labor strikes and rent boycotts, black South Africans use their power as producers and consumers to drive a wedge between the white establishment and the regime and rupture the defense of apartheid.

In early April Jack and his followers resumed the boycott. A network of street and area committees communicated with citizens and diffused responsibility downward, at a time when top leaders were liable to be arrested. Ultimately, the government declared another state of emergency and accused black "revolutionaries" of seeking a violent takeover of power. In fact, nonviolent action made it impossible for the government to maintain apartheid as before.

## NONVIOLENT NATIONAL DEFENSE

**M**ost stories of nonviolent action have been about movements to win rights or overthrow authoritarian regimes. In Denmark the challenge was different. The Danes used nonviolent action as a form of national defense against an invader. The resistance was not strong enough to defeat the German war machine — that was left to the military of the allied countries — but it protected Danish society and culture and frustrated Germany's efforts to exploit Danish resources.

The first stirrings of resistance were expressions of Danes' national identity. For example, students refused to speak German in language classes. "Songfests" brought people together to sing traditional Danish songs. In all these ways Danes asserted their autonomy.

Strikes effectively challenged German control. In the summer of 1943 workers went on strike in dozens of cities in Denmark to protest curfews, the posting of troops inside factories and shipyards and the killings of civilians by soldiers. A year later a new curfew triggered a general strike in Copenhagen. Despite a military crackdown, the strikers held out until the Germans agreed to lift the curfew. The Germans learned that occupation carried a price in the form of civil disruption and lost production.

The most spectacular act of self-defense came in the fall of 1943. Werner Best, the top German official in Denmark, ordered the arrest of all Danish Jews for Friday, October 1. At Rosh Hashanah services the Jewish community learned of the impending raids, and people immediately scattered into hiding. All kinds of Danish organizations sheltered Jewish families — in private homes, in hospitals — and shuttled them to the coast, where fishing boats carried them across a narrow channel to Sweden. In the end 472 out of roughly 7,000 Danish Jews were taken by the Germans. The Danes could not physically expel the German forces, but they did rescue a large majority of the most threatened of their citizens from the jaws of the Holocaust.

### Timeline

**June 1976** — The township of Soweto riots; mass opposition to apartheid begins.

**August 20, 1983** — The United Democratic Front — a coalition of trade unions, women's groups, and youth organizations — is established.

**September 1984** — Riots in Vaal Triangle; beginning of township rebellion.

**July 21, 1985** — The first state of emergency is imposed.

**June 12, 1986** — The second state of emergency is imposed; thousands are arrested.

**October 1989** — The government begins releasing imprisoned leaders of the African National Congress (ANC).

**February 11, 1990** — After 27 years in prison, black leader Nelson Mandela is released.

**August 26-29, 1994** — South Africans vote in fair and free elections; the ANC government is voted into power.



Mkhulisi Jack rallies support for consumer boycotts in South Africa, 1986

## OPENINGS FOR OPPOSITION

The most severe authoritarian regimes make it difficult for any sort of opposition to organize. So the first order of business is to claim or create space in which to organize, communicate and mobilize — necessary activities to building a movement.

Even during the early years of Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile, when his regime was at its most fearsome, not all opportunity for action was closed off. Pinochet, who claimed to be a defender of religious morality, had to tread carefully around the Catholic Church. Parish churches provided places where banned groups could meet, and some Church leaders documented human rights abuses and gave help to the regime's victims.

The "days of protest" that began in 1983 were not designed to oust Pinochet, but they forced him to concede ground to a budding opposition. After several months of largely nonviolent protests, his interior minister talked with opposition leaders, hoping that concessions would tamp down unrest. As a result, emergency regulations were lifted, exiles were allowed to return, and censorship and controls over public life were lessened. This allowed long-suppressed political organizations to get back on their feet and emboldened people to speak out for more changes. The regime had not cracked, but it had tolerated what Chileans themselves called an "opening."

As the 1988 plebiscite on his presidency approached, Pinochet was constrained to yield further to the opposition in order to make the vote look fair and to enhance his international legitimacy. He permitted an opposition newspaper to publish. Moreover, he allowed the opposition to register voters and even gave them time on television. By exploiting these opportunities, the opposition succeeded in rallying the country to end Pinochet's rule.

## ORGANIZING FOR DEMOCRACY

The hub of the great strike that rocked Poland in August 1980 was a conference room in the enormous Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk. There, delegates elected by workers from each of the striking factories of the region formed an Interfactory Strike Committee to coordinate the strike as it spread along the Baltic Coast. In almost

## PROGRAM TWO: DENMARK — LIVING WITH THE ENEMY

### Synopsis

On April 9, 1940, shortly after the beginning of World War II, German troops invade Denmark. Danish forces are badly outnumbered and outgunned, and the government accepts German entry without a fight. The Nazis' aim is to exploit Danish agriculture and industry to advance the broader war effort in Europe. They hope that leaving the Danish government in place will help persuade the Danes to cooperate.

Resistance begins slowly, limited at first to displays of Danish culture, publication of underground anti-Nazi tracts, and isolated acts of sabotage. In the summer of 1943 the Danes' resentment of German repression flares up into mass nonviolent opposition. Strikes begin in Odense and other industrial towns. German reprisals galvanize an underground resistance. That fall SS troops arrive to round up and deport Jews, but civilians hide most Jewish families and ferry them to safety in Sweden.



Family members of the "disappeared" at a human rights rally in Chile, December 1988

constant session, it debated long and hard and took votes to reach decisions. All the while technicians made audiocassettes for rank-and-file strikers, so they could keep track of what their leaders were doing and hold them accountable.

The representatives of the striking workers did not challenge one-party rule in Poland; their stated goal was to gain the right to establish an independent trade union. The strikers, however, organized themselves democratically, and by doing so they helped instill in Polish society the skills needed to sustain democracy when it came at the end of the 1980s.

Nonviolent movements have often fostered conditions where democracy could take root and flourish. In South Africa's black townships, activists urged people to elect neighborhood committees that would represent their interests. In both Poland and South Africa, opposition leaders depended on grassroots support.

However they are organized, nonviolent movements are not armies, where those on top command those beneath them. They rely on the initiative of ordinary people — like the Danish citizens who protected their Jewish compatriots during the Nazi occupation, the Indians who made their own salt and boycotted English cloth or the South Africans who defied the government by organizing their own services in the black townships. Nonviolent

movements succeed only when they mobilize large numbers to act together, whether in a strike, a boycott, a march or some other kind of action. This also is what is needed to form a vital civil society.



A Danish man watches industrial sabotage during World War II

## Timeline

April 9, 1940 – Germany invades Denmark.

Early 1942 – Anti-German sabotage within occupied Denmark begins.

July 1943 – Anti-German strikes begin in Odense and spread across Denmark.

August 28, 1943 – The Danish government rejects the German ultimatum to crack down on resistance; Danish ministers resign in protest.

September 16, 1943 – The Freedom Council is established.

October 1943 – Germans begin the round-up of Jews in Denmark; helped by other Danes, most Jews escape to Sweden.

June 26, 1944 – Copenhagen workers start leaving work early; a general strike begins.

July 3, 1944 – German officials give in to the strikers' demands.

May 4, 1945 – Germany capitulates to Allies.

## TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR DANES

Arne Sejr was 17 when the Germans invaded. On the first day of the occupation, he noticed that people in his small town were friendly to the German soldiers, and he was outraged. He went home and typed up 25 copies of a list of "commandments" to his fellow Danes:

1. You must not go to work in Germany and Norway.
2. You shall do a bad job for the Germans.
3. You shall work slowly for the Germans.
4. You shall destroy important machines and tools.
5. You shall destroy everything that may be of benefit to the Germans.
6. You shall delay all transport.
7. You shall boycott German and Italian films and papers.
8. You must not shop at Nazis' stores.
9. You shall treat traitors for what they are worth.
10. You shall protect anyone chased by the Germans.

**Join the struggle for the freedom of Denmark!**

Sejr then stuffed his list into the mailboxes of the most prominent people in his town. The commandments were later recopied and passed from hand to hand to people all over the country.

# CONCLUSION

Nonviolent resistance becomes a "force more powerful" to the extent that it takes away a regime's capacity to assert control. To succeed, a nonviolent movement cannot simply take a principled stand for "nonviolence." It has to devise a strategy for action. In turn, this strategy must broadly communicate goals, mobilize people and select sanctions to punish opponents. To shift the momentum of conflict in their favor, nonviolent resisters must diversify the scope and variety of these sanctions, defend their popular base against repression and exploit their opponents' weaknesses and concessions. In this way they undermine the regime's claim to legitimacy.

Those who lead an authoritarian or unjust system will then lose support inside and outside the country. When they see they can no longer count on repression to maintain control, they will begin to realize that their prospects for staying in power are no longer favorable. The result may be that they surrender, or compromise with the nonviolent movement, or even forswear oppression and cede power to the resisters. Any outcome will ultimately have to be confirmed by the nonviolent movement.

Many times in the twentieth century, movements that spoke for the people had occasion to choose between violent insurrection and nonviolent resistance as the way to seek power. Many were seduced by the romance of revolutionary violence, believing (in Mao Zedong's famous words) "power grows out of the barrel of a gun." Although violence can instill fear for a time or destroy lives and property, it cannot force people to give its users their consent — something they need to maintain their position.

In the stability and endurance of democracies, the political philosopher Hannah Arendt saw a superior notion of power: "when...the Romans spoke of the *civitas* as their form of government, they had in mind a concept of power and law whose essence did not rely on the command-obedience relationship." In the eighteenth century, the leaders of the political revolutions in America and Europe resurrected this same idea in their republics, "where the rule of law, resting on the power of the people, would put an end to the rule of man over man."

By dissolving the people's consent to authoritarian rule, nonviolent resisters throughout the twentieth century not only neutralized repression. They also established democratic rule in country after country. Thanks to their efforts, a robust alternative to violence as a way to advance great causes and overturn injustice exists in the twenty-first century.

## PROGRAM TWO: POLAND — "WE'VE CAUGHT GOD BY THE ARM"

### Synopsis

In August 1980 workers at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, on Poland's Baltic Coast, go on strike. For decades Poland's trade unions have been controlled by the ruling Communist Party and have done little to protect workers from mistreatment or to bargain for higher pay. Now the shipyard workers, led by Lech Walesa, demand the right to form their own independent unions, free of communist control.

On the first day, August 14, the strikers prepare to occupy their shipyard for as long as the strike lasts, and they send word to other shipyards and factories around Gdansk. Within two days the strike has spread to more than 20 enterprises, which send delegates to the Lenin Shipyard; they form a committee and draw up demands. Having learned from unsuccessful strikes in 1970, in which workers turned violent, they maintain discipline and propagate the strike

to new parts of the country. The regime buckles under the growing pressure. Officials agree to talk to the strikers' committee and end up agreeing to most of the demands. The strike ends on August 31, and Polish workers begin building Solidarity, the first free trade union in communist Europe.

# ANNA WALENTYNOWICZ

## DISCUSSION

1. How did activists in both India and South Africa use these three forms of non-violent sanctions: protests (such as parades and demonstrations), noncooperation (such as boycotts, resignations and civil disobedience) and direct intervention (such as factory occupations and blockades)? How did the sanctions neutralize or limit the power of the regime?
2. Early in his career Gandhi once labeled a campaign of nonviolent action as "passive resistance." Is this a good description of what the Indians shown in the program were doing? Is it a good label for nonviolent action in general? Explain.
3. Participants in almost every nonviolent movement this past century have confronted the question of how to prepare for a possible crackdown. What risks did the Nashville students run by going ahead with the sit-in? What might have happened had the students fought back when attacked on February 27, 1960? Why did they decide to remain in jail, when they could have just as easily walked out? Did the events of February 27 work to the advantage of the students or that of the segregationists?
4. Why do activists campaigning against repressive regimes often go to great lengths to gain the attention of foreign media, especially media from the United States and Western Europe? How can a nonviolent movement, in its opposition to a government, use international attention?
5. What is the relationship between the form that movements have taken and the political outcomes that they have produced? Is it possible to build a democratic political order using nondemocratic means? Are there examples where this has occurred? Is a movement based on nonviolent action more likely to result in a sustainable democratic system than one based on guerilla warfare or terrorism? Why or why not?
6. Early in the August 1980 strike in Poland, some leaders called for expanding the list of demands to include free elections and an end to all censorship — basic

The spark that ignited the strike at the Lenin Shipyard was the firing of crane operator Anna Walentynowicz on August 7, 1980. Walentynowicz had worked in the shipyard nearly as long as the communists had ruled Poland. She joined the party because the communists said they would build a just and equal society. Instead, they denied ordinary workers any right to speak out and organize. Disillusioned, she took it on herself to speak out for workers at party meetings and in doing so became a thorn in the side of the shipyard management, which finally fired her.

A week later, when workers got on the trams taking them to the shipyard, activists shoved leaflets into their hands. "Anna Walentynowicz has become unacceptable because she defended others," the leaflet said. "If we are not able to resist this, there won't be anybody who will speak out about raising quotas, breaking safety regulations, or forcing people to work overtime." The strike that ended with Polish workers winning the right to form independent unions began as a defense of one woman.

## Timeline

**December 1970** – Workers in Gdansk and other Baltic Coast cities strike. Strikers clash with government troops.

**September 23, 1976** – KOR (Workers' Defense Committee) is formed by dissidents to help families of workers in jail or on trial.

**July 1980** – Polish leaders announce food price hikes, triggering strikes.

**August 14, 1980** – Workers at Lenin Shipyard strike.

**August 16, 1980** – Interfactory Strike Committee forms at Lenin Shipyard, representing strikers from different enterprises across Poland.

**August 23, 1980** – Communist Party negotiators arrive at Lenin Shipyard to begin talks with the strike committee.

**August 31, 1980** – Agreement is signed, giving workers the right to form unions independent from government control.

**September 17, 1980** – A nationwide independent trade union, Solidarity, is established.

**December 13, 1981** – The government declares a "state of war" and suspends Solidarity.

**February 6, 1989** – The Polish government convenes roundtable talks, which include Solidarity, to discuss Poland's future.

**June 4, 1989** – Solidarity wins control of the government in free elections.

## Twentieth Century Timeline

**1906**

Nonviolent resistance to anti-Indian discrimination in South Africa begins.

**1914-1918**

World War I

**1919**

Gandhi leads first all-India campaign against British rule; unarmed Indians massacred at Amritsar.

**1930**

Beginning of campaign of civil disobedience for Indian independence.

**1933**

Adolf Hitler comes to power in Germany.

**1939**

Germany invades Poland; World War II begins.

**1940**

Germany invades Denmark.

**1944**

General strike by Copenhagen workers forces German occupiers to offer concessions.

**1945**

World War II ends with German defeat.

**1947**

India wins independence from British Empire.

**1948**

National Party comes to power in South Africa, imposes apartheid.

**1952**

African National Congress conducts defiance campaign against apartheid.

challenges to the Communist Party's political dictatorship. How might the conflict have turned out differently had the strike committee decided to include these political demands? Was dropping these demands a mistake, or was it a wise choice?

7. How have changes in communication technology affected the kinds of power that nonviolent movements and the regimes they oppose can exercise? What new tactics, for instance, might a present-day Gandhi employ in the era of cell phones and e-mail? Are the new technologies more likely to favor popular movements or repressive regimes?

8. Industrial workers have played key roles in several of the stories presented in this series. Why have workers and their unions often been such effective vehicles for nonviolent action? What forms of leverage do workers possess that ordinary civilians do not?

## RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

1. In 1906 Gandhi wrote, "The British have not taken India; we have given it to them. They are not in India because of their strength, but because we keep them." Ask students to write a research paper that supports or rejects Gandhi's claim. The paper should be based on readings about the history of the raj in India. How was it that Indians "kept" the British in India by cooperating with their rule? In what ways did Indians collaborate with those who colonized them? Finally, how did Gandhi's insight influence his 1930-31 civil disobedience campaign?

2. From the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s the civil rights movement in the United States was driven by local campaigns in cities and rural areas across the South. Although these campaigns all involved nonviolent action, they followed different strategies. Activists learned from each other's successes and failures and strove to adopt tactics that fit local conditions. Have each student (or a small group of students) prepare a report on one local civil rights campaign either before or after 1960. The report should describe its goals, how it mobilized, the nonviolent sanctions it chose to use, how it responded to violence and how it separated the authorities from their means of support.

## PROGRAM TWO: CHILE — DEFEAT OF A DICTATOR

### Synopsis

On the evening of May 11, 1983, all over Santiago, Chile's capital, a racket begins. People beat on pots and pans and honk car horns. They also light bonfires and build barricades. They are answering a call by the copper miners' union to break the silence that descended on Chile in 1973, when a junta led by Gen. Augusto Pinochet seized power. The junta claimed that it was saving the country from communism — and then proceeded to terrorize its opponents through kidnappings, torture and murder. Now, a decade later, driven by economic

hardship as well as political anger, people flood the streets each month for "days of protest." The government disperses the crowds with bullets, but it also tries to defuse the protests by offering concessions. These tactics backfire. By late 1983 the protests are taken over by violent extremists. Middle-class people shy away from the increasingly violent demonstrations, and the opposition splinters between moderate and leftist elements.

After years of sporadic protest, Pinochet continues to invoke fear of a leftist takeover to justify his grip on power.

Emboldened by a failed assassination attempt in 1986, Pinochet begins to regard himself as invincible. Citing left-wing violence to frighten the country, Pinochet goes ahead with a plebiscite in which people would vote "yes" or "no" on whether he should continue as president. Defying expectations, opposition groups win a victory for "no" in the October 1988 vote. An opposition coalition wins parliamentary elections and ends the long Pinochet dictatorship.

3. Starting in the mid-1980s anti-Apartheid movements in the United States and Europe succeeded in pressuring governments and corporations to take economic measures against South Africa. At the time, some people in these countries opposed such economic punishment; they argued that it harmed the people it was supposed to help more than it harmed the oppressive regime. Ask students to write a paper based on research about the effects of economic sanctions in South Africa. What impact did these sanctions have on the South African government's ability to sustain apartheid?

4. In both Chile and Poland the Catholic Church had prominence in the movements against authoritarian control. Have students examine the specific activities undertaken by the Church in each country and write a paper describing the Church's influence on events in each place. How important was the Church's role? Would the nonviolent movement have been successful if the Church had not played a role? Could another institution or organization have performed the same function?

5. In the nonviolent opposition to President Augusto Pinochet in Chile and to the British in India, women's organizations and individual women played a prominent role. Ask your students to conduct an informal debate on the question: Do non-violent campaigns create more opportunity than violent campaigns for participation and leadership by women? They should consider what kinds of roles violent and nonviolent campaigns create for participants and whether those roles are likely to encourage or discourage significant participation by women.

6. Ask students to prepare a research paper about the democracy movement in China. The paper should focus on how nonviolent movements adjust their actions to sustain their momentum for change and to forestall or exploit violence by the regime. Students should research the events that led up to the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989 and the consequences of the massacre. Should the Chinese students have limited their demands in order to make some gains and consolidate their position? What could they have done to protect the movement from repression?

**1955**  
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., leads bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama.

**1960**  
Unarmed protesters are massacred in Sharpeville, South Africa; ANC commits to armed struggle.  
Sit-ins by Nashville students end segregation at lunch counters.

**1968**  
Assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

**1970**  
Polish workers strike and clash with police.

**1973**  
Military junta overthrows civilian government of Chile.

**1980**  
Polish strikers win right to form free trade unions; Solidarity is created.

**1981**  
Polish authorities declare "state of war" and crack down on Solidarity.

**1983**  
Monthly protests against President Augusto Pinochet begin in Chile.

**1988**  
Plebiscite results in victory for groups opposed to Pinochet, leading to the end of his dictatorship in 1990.

**1989**  
Berlin Walls falls.  
Nonviolent democratic movements end Communist rule in Eastern Europe.

## Timeline

**September 11, 1973** – Military junta comes to power in coup against elected government.

**May 11, 1983** – First widespread public protests against Augusto Pinochet's regime.

**August, 1983** – The government talks with members of the opposition and offers concessions.

**September 1983** – Monthly "days of protest" turn violent; middle-class support weakens.

**September 7, 1986** – Assassination attempt on President Pinochet fails.

**October 5, 1988** – Plebiscite ends in victory for those opposing a continuation of Pinochet's dictatorship.



Party for Democracy (PPD) march for "No" vote, March 1988

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Polish workers strike, 1980

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Internet Indian History Sourcebook — links to Web sites with documents on Indian history:

[www.fordham.edu/halsall/india/indiasbook.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/india/indiasbook.html)

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## **WOMEN AND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE**

Gandhi was a social reformer. He criticized the oppression of Indians by other Indians as well as the oppression of Indians by the British. For example, he continually blasted the mistreatment of Indian women and insisted that they should be allowed to play an active role in public life, rather than being sequestered in their homes.

But when it came to women participating in his campaigns, Gandhi hesitated. He barred women from the Salt March and said law-breaking should be left to men. He was concerned that the British might accuse them of hiding behind their women. But the women did not let themselves be confined by Gandhi's limits. They made and sold salt, marched in processions and went to jail by the thousands. Many even became leaders in the campaign. "The British government had been given a jolt by the women of India," wrote one of these leaders. "We were not the meek, mild, illiterate Indian women, content to remain within the four walls of our homes, that they made us out to be."<sup>11</sup>

## WEB SITES

African National Congress archive of historical documents:  
[www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/](http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/)

H-South Africa: discussion log, book reviews, descriptions of sanctions against South Africa, guide to readings, links:  
[www.h-net.msu.edu/~safrica/](http://www.h-net.msu.edu/~safrica/)

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### **NONVIOLENT OPPOSITION IN AN INTERCONNECTED WORLD**

The anti-apartheid forces in South Africa waged their campaign in front of television cameras that beamed images of the struggle to Western countries, fueling international opposition to the regime. In some countries, like Myanmar and Serbia, where nonviolent movements have struggled against authoritarian regimes since the 1990s, world broadcast media have at times been kept out. But in the interconnected world of the Internet, information is harder to control. Opposition movements have organized online and gotten word of their actions to people inside their countries and around the world.

Today repressive regimes can ill afford to be isolated from foreign trading partners or lenders. International forces are likely to play a more decisive role than in the past in conflicts involving nonviolent movements.

### Notes

1. Lech Walesa, videotaped interview by Tom Weidlinger, Gdansk, Poland, September 28, 1998.
2. Peter Ackerman and Christopher Krueger, *Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: The Dynamics of People Power in the Twentieth Century* (Westport: Praeger, 1994), p. 6.
3. Homer Jack, ed., *The Gandhi Reader* (New York: Grove Press, 1994), pp. 313-316.
4. Gene Sharp, "The Role of Power in Nonviolent Struggle," Monograph Series, No. 3, The Albert Einstein Institution, p. 18.
5. Mark Swilling, videotaped interview by Sara Blecher, Stellenbosch, South Africa, June 21, 1999.
6. Ibid.
7. Lourence DePlessis, videotaped interview by Steve York, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, June 11, 1999.
8. Tango Lamani, videotaped interview by Steve York, Randburg, South Africa, June 7, 1999.
9. Mark Swilling, videotaped interview by Sara Blecher, Johannesburg, South Africa, June 21, 1999.
10. Popo Molefe, videotaped interview by Steve York, Johannesburg, South Africa, June 7, 1999.
11. Manmohini Zutshi Sahgal, *An Indian Freedom Fighter Recalls Her Life* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), p. 88.



*The places in yellow are the sites of the nonviolent conflicts featured in **A Force More Powerful**.  
Can you locate the countries where the conflicts listed below occurred?*

## ADDITIONAL ATTEMPTS AT NONVIOLENT OPPPOSITION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

More information on these conflicts can be found at [www.pbs.org/aforcemorepowerful](http://www.pbs.org/aforcemorepowerful) and in the companion book to the television series.

**Russia, 1904-06.** Workers petition Tsar Nicholas II for an eight-hour work day, constitutional government, and freedom of speech, press and religion.

**The Ruhr, 1923.** When French, Belgian and Italian regiments take Germany's industrial heartland in order to extract German reparations for World War I, Germans mount a nonviolent resistance against the occupiers.

**El Salvador, 1944.** A nationwide civic strike takes place in opposition to General Maximiliano Martinez's authoritarian rule and martial law.

**Argentina, 1977-83.** Las Madres – mothers of "the disappeared" – start holding vigils in front of the presidential palace in Buenos Aires, the beginning of a series of nonviolent actions against the military junta.

**Philippines, 1986.** After attempting to steal the election, President Ferdinand Marcos loses power to a popularly elected opponent who has the support of millions of Filipinos.

**Myanmar (Burma), 1988-98.** Despite the National League for Democracy's landslide election victory, the military government refuses to transfer power, leading to a worldwide nonviolent campaign of financial sanctions and boycotts.

**China, 1989.** The student-led pro-democracy movement issues a number of demands and seeks to pressure the Chinese Communist party through hunger strikes, sit-ins, boycotts of classes and, eventually, the fateful occupation of Tiananmen Square.

**Czechoslovakia, 1989.** Students form an alliance between workers and intellectuals to stage a general strike and engage in other nonviolent activities collectively known as the "Velvet Revolution."



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